

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 AID-01 NSC-06 SS-07 EA-06 /032 W

----- 109520

R 291723Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9894

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 13793

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, VS, CB

SUBJECT: MEMBERS OF CODEL EILBERG CONVERSATION WITH
CHAYET, QUAI OFFICIAL HANDLING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

REF: (A) STATE 116459 (B) PARIS 9238

BEGIN SUMMARY: ON MAY 23 CONGRESSMEN CHRISTOPHER DODD
AND EDWARD MEZVINSKEY, ACCOMPANIED BY TWO EMBASSY
OFFICERS, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR CLAUDE CHAYET, DIRECTOR
OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONVENTIONS AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS AND
SPECIAL COORDINATOR OF THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM.
PRINCIPAL TOPICS COVERED WERE: FRENCH REFUGEE POLICY
INCLUDING PRIORITIES; NUMBERS OF REFUGEES; SHORTAGE OF
FUNDS FOR TRAVEL AND RESETTLEMENT; FRENCH ATTITUDE ON
PROCEDURES FOR ACCEPTING REFUGEES IN U.S. CHANNEL.
CONGRESSMEN CAME AWAY WITH VIEW THAT FRANCE WOULD END
UP BEING THE COUNTRY WHICH TOOK IN THE MOST REFUGEES
AFTER THE U.S. THEY ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE U.S. SHOULD
BE UNDERSTANDING ABOUT FRENCH APPROACH. END SUMMARY

1. IN RESPONSE TO REF (A), EMBASSY SET UP CONVERSATION
WITH CLAUDE CHAYET, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONVEN-
TIONS AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS FOR FOUR CONGRESSMEN AND
TWO STAFF MEMBERS OF THE EILBERG SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
JUDICIARY CONCERNED WITH REFUGEE AFFAIRS. TWO MEMBERS
OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE, CONGRESSMEN CHRISTOPHER DODD AND
EDWARD MEZVINSKEY, ATTENDED THE MEETING.

2. BASIC POLICY. AMBASSADOR CHAYET SET FORTH THE
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FRENCH CRITERIA FOR TAKING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN

TERMS OF THEIR CONNECTION WITH FRANCE REF (B). HE THEN UNDERLINED THE NECESSITY FOR FAMILY MEMBERS IN FRANCE TO BE CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING THE REFUGEES. CHAYET SAID FRENCH WERE CONSIDERING REFUGEES ON THE BASIS OF URGENCY ACCORDING TO LOCATION: SINGAPORE, HONG KONG SOUTHEAST ASIA AND FINALLY GUAM AND THE U.S. SINCE FRENCH RECEPTION FACILITIES WERE LIMITED, FRANCE CONSIDERED REFUGEES IN THE U.S. CHANNEL COULD WAIT SINCE THEY RAN FEWER RISKS THAN THOSE ELSEWHERE.

3. NUMBER OF REFUGEES. CHAYET SAID THAT IT WAS COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE TO GIVE EVEN A ROUGH ESTIMATE OF THE REFUGEES WHICH FRANCE MIGHT EVENTUALLY ACCEPT. HE THOUGHT IT MORE REALISTIC TO SPEAK IN TERMS OF THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES WHICH THE GOF COULD PROCESS AT A TIME. THE GOF APPROVED VISAS FOR SOME 2,000 REFUGEES BETWEEN MAY 1 AND 22 OF WHOM ABOUT 500 HAVE REACHED FRANCE. MOST OF THESE WERE OLDER PERSONS, WHO WOULD BE SUPPORTED BY RELATIVES AND WOULD NOT COMPETE ON THE LABOR MARKET. HENCE, THERE HAS NOT YET BEEN ANY POPULAR OBJECTION IN FRANCE TO THE REFUGEE PROGRAM. OF THE 500 WHO CAME WITH SOME FRENCH (OR ICEM) ASSISTANCE, SOME 70 WERE FOUND TO BE WITHOUT MEANS TO BE SETTLED IN FRANCE. WITH FUNDS FROM THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT (50 FRANCS PER PERSON PER DAY FOR 6 MONTHS), A CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION WAS HOUSING AND FEEDING THE REFUGEES UNTIL THEY COULD SETTLE THEMSELVES. SINCE THE FIRST GROUP WAS IN MANY WAYS THE CREAM OF THE REFUGEES, FRANCE EXPECTED AN EVEN LARGER PERCENTAGE IN SUBSEQUENT GROUPS WOULD NEED SOME RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT. WITH THE CURRENT FACILITIES AND FUNDS, FRANCE WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TAKE MORE THAN 700 OR 800 OVER THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. CHAYET HOPED THAT THE GOF WOULD BE ABLE TO BUILD UP ITS CAPACITY TO HANDLE A LARGER FLOW. CHAYET NOTED BY WAY OF COMPARISON THAT THERE WERE SOME 12,000 VIETNAMESE AND 3,829 CAMBODIAN "NON-REFUGEES" ALREADY IN FRANCE AS OF 31 DECEMBER 1974.

4. SHORTAGE OF FUNDS. CHAYET AGAIN UNDERLINED THE SHORTAGE OF FRENCH FUNDS FOR TRAVEL AND SETTLEMENT. CONFIDENTIAL

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FRANCE HAS SUGGESTED THAT ICEM FUND THE TRAVEL OR MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THOSE REFUGEES WHO HAVE THEIR OWN FUNDS. CHAYET POSED THE HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION OF FRANCE'S GREATER RECEPTIVITY FOR REFUGEES WHO WISH TO COME TO FRANCE IF THE U.S. PROVIDED RESETTLEMENT FUNDS. HIS BASIC RESPONSE TO HIS OWN QUESTION WAS THAT EVEN IF THE U.S. PAID 50 FRANCS PER DAY PER PERSON, FRANCE

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WOULD BE RELUCTANT GREATLY TO INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES WHICH IT WOULD ACCEPT AT ANY ONE TIME. HE IMPLIED, HOWEVER, THAT WHEN THEY HAVE GONE THROUGH THE CASES OF THOSE MOST FAVORED, THEY MIGHT THEN FIND THAT LATER BATCHES WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE ONLY IF FUNDS FROM OUTSIDE WOULD HELP OUT THE REFUGEES.

5. ATTITUDE TOWARD REPATRIATION. CHAYET SAID THAT THE GOF THOUGHT THAT WHEN A CAMBODIAN OR VIETNAMESE WISHED TO RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY, HE SHOULD BE HELPED TO GO. HE SAID THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO COERCION NOR EVEN ANY PERSUASION TO TRY TO GET SOMEONE TO RETURN. HE NOTED HE HAD BEEN FRANCE'S REPRESENTATIVE IN HANOI FOR TWO YEARS AND THOUGHT THAT WE SHOULD LOOK AT DANGERS OF RETURN WITH THE EYES OF A VIETNAMESE. IF HE WERE A VIETNAMESE, HE WOULD BE VERY LEERY OF TAKING ANY PRG OR DRV ASSURANCES IF HE HAD ANY DOUBTS ABOUT HIS TOTAL ACCEPTABILITY. HE ACCEPTED THE COMMENT OF CONGRESSMAN DODD THAT HISTORICAL PRECEDENT ARGUED CAUTION; WHEN THE COMMUNISTS TOOK OVER NORTH VIETNAM, THEY WAITED TWO YEARS BEFORE THEY LAUNCHED THEIR MOST SEVERE PURGES. CHAYET AGREED THAT MOST VIETNAMESE REMEMBERED THIS AND WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO RETURN TO SVN. CHAYET NOTED THAT THE DRV AND PRG DISLIKED THE WORD REFUGEE, AND FRANCE'S ACCEPTANCE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES WOULD HAVE AN UNFAVORABLE IMPACT ON RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS, A DISADVANTAGE GOF WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT.

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6. ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. CHAYET SAID THAT FRANCE WAS NOT A MEMBER OF ICEM, BUT AS CONGRESSMEN COULD SEE, THEY WERE WORKING WELL TOGETHER. AS FOR UNHCR, IT HAD ASKED FRANCE SOME QUESTIONS, BUT HAD NOT MADE ANY CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS. FRANCE WOULD BE MORE COMFORTABLE IF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS PLAYED A MORE ACTIVE ROLE, BUT THEY SAW NO SIGN OF THIS YET.

7. PROCEDURES FOR ACCEPTING REFUGEES IN U.S. CHANNEL. ALTHOUGH NOT OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY, FRANCE HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO ACCEPT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN THE U.S. CHANNEL; 150 HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED IN FRANCE. FRANCE CONTINUED TO HOPE THAT INMATES OF CAMPS IN THE CONTINENTAL U.S. COULD GET TO FRENCH CONSULATES TO APPLY FOR VISAS; HE HAD NOT YET HEARD OF THE NEWS REPORTS THAT CONSULAR OFFICERS HAD VISITED THE CAMPS. AS FOR THOSE ON GUAM, THE ICEM PROCEDURE OF GETTING THEM TO HONG KONG AT ICEM EXPENSE FOR VISAS AND THEN ON TO FRANCE, PREFERRABLY BY THEIR OWN MEANS, WAS SUPPORTED BY THE GOF.

8. CONGRESSIONAL REACTION. CONGRESSMEN DODD AND MEZVINSKY WERE PLEASED BY THEIR CONVERSATION WITH CHAYET. THEY SAID THAT THEY FOUND HIM FRANK AND FORTH-COMING, AND THEY FELT THEY HAD LEARNED MUCH WHICH WOULD BE OF VALUE TO THEIR SUBCOMMITTEE. DODD COMMENTED THAT IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT FRANCE WOULD TAKE THE LARGEST NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE AFTER THE U.S. HE REALIZED THAT THE FRENCH APPROACH WAS DIFFERENT, AND IT WAS NOT DESIRABLE TO TRY TO GET THE GOF TO COMMIT ITSELF TO A SPECIFIC NUMBER; THE CRITERIA ADOPTED BY THE FRENCH WOULD ASSURE THAT THE NUMBER ACTUALLY ACCEPTED WOULD BE HIGH. IN ADDITION TO RECOGNIZING THE GOF'S FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS, DODD THOUGHT ONE WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT THE RATHER SLOW FRENCH PACE FOR ACCEPTING REFUGEES GIVEN THE LACK OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AND RECEPTION FACILITIES. THEY UNDERSTOOD CHAYET'S IMPLICATION THAT FRANCE MIGHT ACCEPT MORE REFUGEES (INCLUDING SOME FOR THE U.S.) IF THE U.S. PROVIDED FUNDS PERHAPS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS TO ASSIST IN RESETTLEMENT IN FRANCE.

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